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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/658,283	09/08/2000	C Alexander Turner Jr	LEX-0041-USA	3550

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EXAMINER

MURPHY, JOSEPH F

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

1646

DATE MAILED: 12/26/2002

12

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/658,283

Applicant(s)

TURNER JR ET AL.

Examiner

Joseph F Murphy

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 October 2002.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 3-5 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,2,6 and 7 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

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DETAILED ACTION

Formal Matters

Claims 1 and 2 were amended, and new claim 7 was added in Paper No. 11, 10/11/2002. Claims 3-5 stand withdrawn from consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b). Claims 1-2 and 6-7 are under consideration.

Response to Amendment and Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 10/11/2002 have been fully considered but they are persuasive in part.

The rejection of claim 1-2 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention has been withdrawn.

The rejection of claim 1-2 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, because the specification, while being enabling for a nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1, encoding SEQ ID NO: 2, does not reasonably provide enablement for a nucleic acid which hybridizes to SEQ ID NO: 1 has been withdrawn.

The rejection of claims 1-2 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hillier et al. (1996), has been obviated by Applicant's amendment, and is thus withdrawn.

The rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC 112 second paragraph as being vague and indefinite for recitation of the terms "NGPCR" and "first" has been obviated by Applicant's amendment, and is thus withdrawn.

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Claim Rejections - 35 USC §§ 101, 112, first paragraph

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 1-2, 6 stand rejected, and new claim 7 is rejected, under 35 U.S.C. § 101 because they are drawn to an invention with no apparent or disclosed patentable utility, for reasons of record set forth in Paper No. 10, 7/1/2002. The instant application has provided a description of an isolated DNA encoding a protein and the protein encoded thereby. The instant application does not disclose the biological role of this protein or its significance. Applicant is directed to the Utility Examination Guidelines, Federal Register, Vol. 66, No. 4, pages 1092-1099, Friday January 5, 2001.

According to MPEP § 2107, a rejection for lack of utility is imposed when an invention lacks an asserted specific and substantial utility for the claimed invention and it does not have a readily apparent well-established utility. An invention has a well-established utility if (i) a person of ordinary skill in the art would immediately appreciate why the invention is useful based on the characteristics of the invention (e.g., properties or applications of a product or process), and (ii) the utility is specific, substantial, and credible.

The rejection of record set forth that the nucleic acid encoding the NGPCR polypeptide has been isolated because of its similarity to known proteins. However, it is commonly known in the art that sequence-to-function methods of assigning protein function are prone to errors and

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that accurate inference of function from homology must be a difficult problem since, assuming there are only about 1000 major gene superfamilies in nature, then most homologs must have different molecular and cellular functions. Additionally, the software robots that assign functions to new proteins often assign a function to a whole new protein based on structural similarity of a small domain of the new protein to a small domain of a known protein. Such questionable interpretations are written into the sequence database and are then considered facts. The instant claims are drawn to a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which has an as yet undetermined function or biological significance. Until some actual and specific significance can be attributed to the protein identified in the specification as NGPCR, the instant invention is incomplete. The polypeptide encoded by the nucleic acids of the instant invention is known to be structurally analogous to proteins which are known in the art as G protein coupled receptors. In the absence of knowledge of the natural substrate or biological significance of this protein, there is no immediately obvious patentable use for it. To employ a protein of the instant invention in the identification of substances which inhibit its activity is clearly to use it as the object of further research which has been determined by the courts to be a non-patentable utility. Since the instant specification does not disclose a "real world" use for NGPCR then the claimed invention is incomplete and, therefore, does not meet the requirements of 35 USC § 101 as being useful.

The Doerks reference was cited to show that it is commonly known in the art that sequence-to-function methods of assigning protein function are prone to errors. Applicant argues that the Doerks reference addresses functional predictions based on sequence comparisons to unknown proteins. However, Doerks discusses several proteins which have had

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their function predicted based on homology to known proteins, for example, an assignment error was made for proteins gil2314657 and gil2688341 based on significant similarity to proline dipeptidases, when this assignment was based on similarity of a region that was not the active site (page 248column 3, third full paragraph)

The rejection of Paper No. 10, 7/1/2002 further set forth that even if the NGPCR protein is found to be a G-protein coupled receptors, they are orphan receptors. Since the ligand to this receptor is unknown, the function of the protein is also unknown. Neither the specification nor the art of record disclose any diseases or conditions associated with the function or expression of the NGPCR protein, therefore, there is no "real world" context of use. Further research to identify or reasonably confirm a "real world" context of use is required.

Applicant cites *In re Brana* , 51 F.3d 1560, 34 USPQ2d 1436 (Fed. Cir. 1995).

Accordingly, Office personnel should not construe 35 U.S.C. 101, under the logic of "practical" utility or otherwise, to require that an applicant demonstrate that a therapeutic agent based on a claimed invention is a safe or fully effective drug for humans. The rejection of record is not predicated upon the necessity of Applicant demonstrating a therapeutic use, but that the instant claims are drawn to a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which has an as yet undetermined function or biological significance. Until some actual and specific significance can be attributed to the protein identified in the specification as NGPCR, the instant invention is incomplete.

Applicant argues that the polynucleotide of the instant application can be used in a gene chip to measure expression. However, This asserted utility is credible but not specific or substantial. Such assays can be performed with any polynucleotide. Further, the specification does not disclose the tissues or cell types the polypeptide/mRNA are normally expressed in. The

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specification also discloses nothing about the normal levels of expression of the polypeptide/mRNA. The abnormal levels of the polypeptide/mRNA cannot be determined until a baseline control level is established. Applicant further argues that the instant polynucleotides can be used in genome mapping. This asserted utility is credible but not specific or substantial. Such assays can be performed with any polynucleotide. Further, the specification does not disclose a specific DNA target.

Applicant cites several issued patents as which meet the utility requirements. However, each application is examined on its own merits.

Claims 1-2, 6 stand rejected, and new claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, for reasons of record set forth in Paper No. 10, 7/1/2002. Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112 second paragraph

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 2 recites the term "highly stringent", which is a conditional term and renders the claim indefinite. Furthermore, some nucleic acids which might hybridize under conditions of moderate stringency, for example, would fail to hybridize under conditions of high stringency.

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The metes and bounds of the claim thus cannot be ascertained. This rejection could be obviated by supplying specific conditions supported by the specification which Applicant considers to be "highly stringent".

Conclusion

No claim is allowed.

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

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Advisory Information

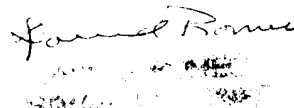
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Joseph F. Murphy whose telephone number is 703-305-7245. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Yvonne Eyler can be reached on 703-308-6564. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-305-3014 for regular communications and 703-308-0294 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0196.



Joseph F. Murphy, Ph. D.
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 1646
December 10, 2002



James R. Rome
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 1646
December 10, 2002